

# SEAC+C

Southeast Asian Connections + Collections  
at the Burke Museum



A UW Museology Thesis Project  
2021 - 2022

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# INTRODUCTION

This zine was the product of a University of Washington Museology Graduate Thesis conducted in 2022. This project invited Southeast Asian students and affiliates into the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture to use the Southeast Asian collections of more than 6,000 cultural pieces to connect to their heritages. In effect, the collections were infused with meaning and purpose, and the museum became a bridge between communities and roots.

As a child of immigrants from the Philippines, I always had a consciousness of my cultural roots but little had I felt the need to understand my heritage, especially growing up in a predominantly White American suburb. When I began my undergraduate studies at the University of Washington, I was already interested in History (imagine my poor mother's heart when I'd originally said I was going to be a pediatric oncologist) but was introduced to the field of Anthropology which had opened a new world of inquiry—especially about my dual Filipino and American upbringing.

It's a broad field. But Anthropology and reading from Filipinx American scholars made it seem more attainable to work at an institution I originally thought was impossible: the museum.

Museums are tools of colonialism—they're exclusive and although they hold much of the public's trust, it is undeniable that much of the history communicated through collections pieces were written by non-members of the disenfranchised communities they were extracted from. Museums in America can come off as imposing and only belonging to and of a certain people: the rich and the "educated."



Map of the Southeast Asia region, where some of the diaspora has roots. Attributed to Free Vector Maps.

My parents expressed this same sentiment as I applied for the UW Museology program until they were able to visit the Burke Museum where I was a Collections Assistant. For many of the pieces from the Philippines, they could recognize their significance from their own experiences and knowledge. The collections were a resource and places such as the Burke, which does extensive work with Native communities, was a space to use and occupy.

Collections often sit as mere, static objects when in reality, they have the potential for stories and connection only if folks are given the opportunity. This project serves as a framework to demonstrate one of the many ways in which members of diasporic communities can use collections to learn about their own heritage, which can often feel disjointed or missing. Community members at the UW who identified themselves as Southeast Asian used the collections to imbue them with new meaning and stories.

The Southeast Asian American diaspora in the Pacific Northwest is widely represented in the Burke Museum's Heritage: Arts & Cultures Collections, with cultural pieces from the Cordilleras of Luzon to the hills of Northern Thailand. This zine presents projects of various modalities to illustrate not only how knowledge can be learned and passed on, but also to demonstrate the numerous ways connections can be made through collections.



# CONNECTING TO CULTURE THROUGH DANCE

Leah Huff

*Pukol, tinikling, and binasuan all fall under the category of dances from the barrio, or rural, suite which are often danced as part of a celebration or festival. These dances are lively and expressive, showcasing the talent and abilities of the dancers.*

*As someone from a Filipino immigrant family that was largely assimilated upon arrival to the U.S., I have used my time at the University of Washington to relearn U.S. history and its connection with colonialism and imperialism. Through the Sayaw sa UW Filipino dance troupe, I have used dance as a way to connect with my culture, heritage, and the Filipino community.*

## **Pukol**

The word "pukol" means "to strike." It originated in the Visayan Islands and is likely derived from a children's game called "pokoe." This dance involves individuals striking together two coconut halves together in their hands and imitates a playful chase between dance partners.

## **Tinikling**

Tinikling is arguably the most well-known dance of the Philippines. It is a folk dance that originated in the Visayan Islands during Spanish occupation. Rice farmers in this area used bamboo traps to



This work illustrates my personal journey of connecting to my Filipino heritage, history, and culture through Filipino traditional folk dancing here at UW.

protect their crops, but tikling birds were able to avoid them. The movements of the tinikling dance emerged from locals attempting to imitate the movements of the tikling birds escaping the bamboo traps.

## **Binasuan**

The word "binasuan" means "with the use of drinking glasses." As such, dancers balance glasses of water on their heads and in their hands. It is usually danced at celebrations and festivals and involves difficult choreography, including rolling on the ground while balancing all three glasses on the dancers' head and hands.



# REFLECTIONS FROM HOME

Swam Lin

မင်္ဂလာပါ (*Min-ga-la-bar*), which means "hello". My name is Swam Lin. I want to explain about Burmese pieces that I found by visiting to the Burke Museum. It is very impressive for me to see pieces from Myanmar which are more than I expected. So, I choose three things that are reflected in my experiences from when I grew up in Myanmar (Burma).

လက်ဖက်သုပ် (Lahpet Thoke)

Let's talk about food. Since I was born in Myanmar (Burma), I am familiar with a lot of Burmese foods, and these are reflected a lot in Burmese Culture. Burmese foods are generally fusions of Chinese and Indian Cuisines. There is a thing that makes Burmese foods unique is that they give a lot of flavors not too spicy but very tasty.

Lahpet Thoke is the most unique Burmese Cuisine. It is fermented tea leaf salad. Many Asian countries serve tea leaf as hot or cold drink. In Myanmar, we also eat as a meal. In the traditional way, we put fermented or pickle tea leaves in a specialized box with lid and pair with hot tea. Usually, we serve in tea break between lunch and dinner. Many Asian countries serve tea leaf as hot or cold drink. In Myanmar, we also eat as a meal.





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Top: Flag of Myanmar (Burma)

Second row (L-R): လက်ဖက်သုပ် Lahpet thoke (Photo by Swam Lin), အိုးစည် Oao si (Photo by Swam Lin)

Bottom row (L-R): စိပ်ပုတီး Seik Badi (Photo by Swam Lin), Lahpet thoke cuisine (Image from Wikipedia)

▶ This page: Swam and his family viewing a Burmese parabaik, or tattoo book.

For the decoration, fermented tea leaves are seasoned with salt and sesame oil and placed in the center, surrounded by fried garlic, fried chickpeas, fried butterfly peas, dried shrimp, toasted sesame, and peanuts.

Then, pick a few amounts of two or more components with a spoon and enjoy it. Usually, we mixed every component with shredded tomatoes and cabbage on a plate as a meal.

စိပ်ပုတီး (Seik Badi)

Prayer bead (Seik Badi) is commonly used in Theravada Buddhists in Myanmar including exact 108 beads. It was mainly used for religious purposes. Sometimes, it is used for meditation to calm your mind and recover your soul. For me, it is hard to meditate with a bare hand for a long time. With the use of beads, I can focus much better on meditation which helps to relax my mind for the interview, exams, and other stressful activities.

အိုးစည် (Oao Si)

Oao Si is a traditional musical instrument of Myanmar. There is a bigger version that actually plays as a musical instrument. In this picture, it is a smaller version that can be used as a decoration or toy for children. I got this little Oao Si as a birthday present from my grandmother. You can see little drums in every house in Myanmar. It can play not only as a toy but also as a musical instrument. It is the first instrument that I had experienced in traditional music.





# CONNECTION TO FOLK TALES - VIETNAM

Amie Le

## **Collection Pieces**

The pieces used for this project are a ceramic plate and lime pot (Bình Vôi). Both are made from clay and glazed. The plate is the shape of an areca leaf with a whole and a sliced betel nut inside another leaf. On top of the leaf plate is another leaf where the sliced betel nut is wrapped and a red fruit. It was made in Bát Tráng village by Đặng Góm and is designed to look like how it is traditionally served. The lime container is decorated with ceramic vines and betel nuts with one hole on the side for a long spoon to scoop out slaked lime that is served with betel nut and areca leaves. These pieces are commonly found in middle to upper class families who can afford them as decoration in their homes. The pieces were originally donated to tell the tale of Tấm Cám, a Vietnamese Cinderella tale.

Although the pieces are rather modern, they were the first to catch my eye in terms of their simplicity, yet intricate representation of Vietnamese culture. Both are pieces used as decoration or tools, but also connect well with one another in the tale of Trầu Cau (The Betel Nut and Areca Leaf). The story tells a tale that surrounds the bonds between both siblings and a married couple. As a folk tale there are parts where it is fictional, but it also gives meaning to why the betel nut, areca leaf, and slaked lime paste are chewed together.

The combination is mainly served for guests at traditional engagement ceremonies, weddings, celebrations, used as offerings at rituals and even funerals. Although the tradition is not commonly practiced with the modernization of Vietnam's cultures in cities, it remains important especially in smaller community villages and older generations.

These pieces, although ceramic, symbolize items that harbor pieces of older traditions that gradually lose their value. The plate is how the items are served to guests while the lime pot can be used for lime container purposes or is also usually given as a gift at wedding ceremonies.

## **The Importance of Storytelling**

Mainly as these pieces represent the items in the tale of Trầu Cau, of one of the folktales my parents used to tell me, I wanted to incorporate the aspect of storytelling into the project. Culture can be passed down from generation to generation through art, fashion, music, as well as storytelling. As a Vietnamese American, my connection to my heritage stemmed from the stories that my parents would tell me such as how they grew up, memories of lessons learned, and also folktales. Attached to this project is the tale of Trầu Cau in Vietnamese, a self-translated English version of the story, and a QR code for a recording of my mom reading the Vietnamese version. I wanted to provide those with an immersive experience as if they were a child again listening to a parent tell them a story.

## **Remarks**

Through this project I was given an opportunity to not only create connections between the collection pieces and my culture, but also connect with my parents. I met with them several times to ask about their versions of the story, interviewing them on what they remember about the custom of chewing betel nut for adults as children. I was also able to work at the Burke Museum and explore the collection which gave me a safe space to explore the variety of items once held by community members. I hope that this project gave a glimpse into the ties of my heritage and its generational bonds of storytelling.

Scan this QR code to listen to Amie's mother tell the story in Vietnamese!





## Truyện Trầu Cau

Ngày xưa có hai anh em họ Cao, người anh tên Tân và người em tên Lang. Mẹ mất sớm nên hai anh em rất yêu thương nhau, đi đâu cũng có nhau. Tân lớn hơn Lang một tuổi nhưng hai anh em có khuôn mặt và dáng người rất giống nhau, áo quần cũng mặc chung nên nhiều lần. Những người bạn của họ cũng nhận lầm Tân với Lang.

Năm Tân 18 tuổi và Lang 17 tuổi, người cha bị bệnh nặng. Trước khi mất người cha nhờ người bạn là thầy giáo họ Lưu giúp đỡ chăm sóc cho Tân và Lang. Thầy giáo Lưu có cô con gái cùng tuổi với Tân.

Tân và cô gái gặp gỡ và yêu nhau. Một năm sau Tân hỏi cưới cô gái. Thầy giáo Lưu vui mừng gả con gái cho Tân. Sau khi cưới, hai vợ chồng đến ở một ngôi nhà mới, Lang cũng đến ở chung.

Từ ngày lấy vợ, Tân không còn lo cho Lang như trước nữa. Lang buồn nhưng lại không dám nói.

Một hôm Lang và Tân cùng lên rừng đi săn đến tối mới về. Lang về trước làm vợ Tân nhằm liền ôm chăm lấy Lang. Lúc đó Tân bước vào sau nên nhìn thấy và ghen với vợ và Lang. Tân không thèm nghe lời giải thích của vợ và Lang và đuổi Lang ra khỏi nhà. Lang tức giận bỏ nhà ra đi. Lang đi mãi suốt mấy ngày, tới bờ một con sông lớn nước chảy rất mạnh. Vừa mệt vừa đói, không đi tiếp được nữa Lang té gục trên bờ và ôm mặt khóc. Lang khóc mãi, khóc mãi, và ngất xỉu. Sáng hôm sau, Lang đã hóa thành hòn đá.

Suốt mấy ngày vẫn không thấy Lang về, Tân hối hận biết là Lang bỏ đi vì giận mình. Một tuần rồi mà Lang cũng chưa về, Tân hoảng hốt để vợ lại nhà để đi tìm Lang. Đi mãi đến bờ con sông, Tân đến bên cạnh hòn đá và không biết đó là Lang. Tân ngồi xuống khóc mãi cho đến lúc ngất xỉu chết. Tân hóa thành một cái cây thân mọc thẳng lên trời, bên cạnh hòn đá.

Vợ Tân, chờ mãi không thấy chồng về, cũng bỏ nhà đi tìm. Nàng cũng tới con sông khóc cạn cả nước mắt và chết, hóa thành một cây dây quấn quanh lấy cây kia.

Đợi mãi không thấy ba người về, thầy giáo Lưu nhờ mọi người tìm giúp. Tìm đến bờ sông, mọi người nghĩ là Tân và vợ và Lang đã bị rơi xuống sông chết. Họ dựng miếu thờ cả ba người trẻ tuổi ở bờ sông ngay tại hòn đá và hai cây lạ. Người dân quanh vùng gọi là miếu "anh em hòa thuận, vợ chồng thương yêu".

Một năm nọ trời hạn hán không có mưa. Cây cỏ chết, chỉ có hai cây mọc bên cạnh hòn đá trước miếu là vẫn xanh mượt. Hòn đá càng ngày càng mềm có màu trắng đục như sữa và lớn rộng ra. Vua Hùng một hôm ngự giá qua xứ đó. Khi đi qua trước miếu, vua ngạc nhiên hỏi:

- "Miếu này thờ vị thần nào? Mấy loại cây và hòn đá lớn này ta chưa từng thấy bao giờ?".

Vua cho gọi mấy cụ già ở quanh vùng đến hỏi và khi nghe được câu chuyện Vua rất cảm động. Vua sai người trèo lên cây hái quả và lá xuống, cắt một miếng nhỏ trên hòn đá. Khi cả ba thứ nhai lẫn với nhau thì có một vị lạ ở đầu lưỡi: nó vừa ngon ngọt, vừa thơm cay. Người thấy nóng bừng như có hơi men, môi đỏ tươi sắc, mặt hồng hào tươi đẹp và khi nhai xong nhổ xuống đất sẽ có màu đỏ như máu. Vua bảo:

- Thật là kỳ lạ! Đúng là tình yêu thương của họ thật là nồng nàn thắm đỏ. Vua đặt tên cho cây cao là cây cau, cây dây leo là cây trầu và hòn đá là vôi.

Từ đó vua Hùng ra lệnh cho mọi nơi phải gây giống cho ra nhiều hai loại cây ấy. Còn hòn đá vôi thì càng ngày càng lan rộng ra thành núi đá vôi. Bắt buộc trai gái khi kết hôn thế nào cũng phải tìm cho được ba món: trầu, cau và vôi để ghi nhớ tình yêu không bao giờ phai nhạt cũng như thể hiện rõ tình cảm thắm thiết giữa những người thân trong gia đình. Từ đó dân Việt mới có tục ăn trầu.

Cho đến ngày nay, trầu cau vẫn là thứ không thể thiếu trong đám hỏi, đám cưới của người Việt.

Left: Lime pot container (binh vôi). Right: Ceramic plate.





### ***The Tale of the Betel Nut and the Areca Leaf***

Once upon a time there were two siblings of the Cao family, the older brother named Tân and the younger brother named Lang. Their mother passed away early on so the two brothers really loved each other, everywhere they went they had each other. Tân was older than Lang by one year but both brothers had really similar faces and body types, clothes also were worn together many times. Each of the family friends also mixed up Tân and Lang.

The year Tân was 18 years old and Lang was 17 years old, their father was severely sick. Before their father passed away, he had a friend who is a teacher from the Luu family to help take care of Tân and Lang. Teacher Luu had a daughter the same age as Tân.

Tân and the daughter met and fell in love. One year later Tân proposed to the daughter. Teacher Luu was happy to marry his daughter off to Tân. After marrying, the couple moved to a new house, Lang also came to live with them.

Since the day he got a wife, Tân no longer took care of Lang like before anymore. Lang was sad but again did not want to say anything.

One day Lang and Tân both went to the forest to hunt until night time. Lang went home first which made Tân's wife mistakenly hug Lang. At that moment Tân stepped in behind then saw and became jealous of his wife and Lang. Tân did not bother listening to his wife and Lang's explanation and kicked Lang out of the house. Lang, angered, left home. Lang went away for several days, until he reached the shore of a big river with a really strong running stream. While tired and hungry, not able to go on anymore Lang fell down on the shore and held his face crying. Lang continued to cry, and cry, and finally passed out. The morning after, Lang had turned into a stone.

For several days there was still no sight of Lang coming home, Tân regretted knowing that Lang left because of him. It was one week already but Lang still did not return, Tân panicked leaving his wife at home to go find Lang. Taking forever to get to the river, Tân arrived next to the stone and did not know it was Lang. Tân sat down crying until he fainted and died. Tân turned into a tree that grew straight into the sky, next to the stone.

Tân's wife, waiting forever not seeing her husband come back, also went out of the house to find him. Nàng also came to the river crying all her tears and died, turning into a vine that wrapped around the other tree.

Waiting after a while not seeing the three of them come back, teacher Luu has everyone help search. Finding the river, each person thought Tân and his wife and Lang had fallen into the river and died. The people erected a shrine for all three young people at the river right at the stone and the two strange trees. Citizens around the area called the shrine "The harmony of siblings, the love of husband and wife."

One year there was a drought with no rain. Vegetation died, only the two trees growing beside the stone in front of the shrine remained green. The stone each day became softer with a whiter color like milk and increasing in size. King Hùng one day passed by the place. When passing in front of the shrine, the king asked surprised:

- "What god does this shrine worship? I have never seen this many types of plants and large stones before?"

The king called the old people of the area to come ask them and when he heard the story he was very touched. The king had someone climb the tree and pick a fruit and leaf down, cutting a small slice of the stone. When all three are chewed together there is a strange taste on the tip of the tongue: its both sweet, and spicy at the same time. People felt the body heat up as if they were drunk, bright red lips, beautiful rosy face and when chewing is finished spitting on the ground it will have a red color like blood. The king said:

- "It is strange! It is true that their love is passionate and crimson. I will name the tall tree the areca tree, the vines the betel nut and the stone lime.

Since then king Hùng ordered for every place to have to breed to produce a lot of the two kinds of trees. And the lime stone each day kept spreading in size until it became a lime stone mountain. Girls and boys when marrying were obligated to find three things: betel nut, areca and lime to commemorate their love to never fade as well as present the close love between close people in the family. Since then, Vietnamese people have had the tradition of eating betel nut.

To this day, the betel nut remains something that cannot be missed at engagement ceremonies and weddings of Vietnamese people.



She came to this country looking for a better life,  
but all she found was a child that didn't look like her.



## “WARP-FACED”

2022

Digital manipulation on film photograph

Rose Mathison

I've thought a lot about the profound power cultural and ancestral belongings hold, particularly in feelings of connection, identity, and representation. I own a golden inaul from Maguindanao which is something that makes me feel very connected to my central and southern Philippine ancestry even though I've lived my entire life in the US.

The image is a photograph of my mother and I taken in Cebu, her home island, almost 30 years ago. This piece has two meanings for me. It is a representation of how I find comfort and connection through the woven materials and traditions of my people. I feel the ancestral knowledge of my community interwoven on my skin as it is within each strand of yarn. But also, this image is my way of coping with how I've been forced to search for my identity within tangible things in lieu of a relationship with my mother. This image was my way of gifting my mother something she couldn't have, something "more Filipino" than me.





## MY GREAT-GRANDFATHER THE JEWELER: MARIANO SALVADOR

Jessica Rubenacker

Left: tamburin pendant necklace (Accession ID 2018-101)  
Center and Right: a tamburin-style bracelet and coral earrings I had inherited from my grandmother.

When given the opportunity to pore over the Burke's Southeast Asian collections, I was very much interested in researching artifacts from Ilocos Norte, the province from which my mother's family originates. But when looking through collections, the Philippine jewelry caught my eye. In fact, one of the tamburin necklaces (Accession ID 2018-101) reminded me of a piece that I had inherited from my grandmother. I recalled hearing that my great-grandfather, my grandmother's father, Mariano was a jeweler but I didn't know the details and it made me wonder if he had actually made this jewelry. This sparked a desire to find out more about my great-grandfather's history.



I asked my mother and aunt what they had remembered of their grandfather. My mother, along with her parents and her four older siblings immigrated to the United States in the late 1950s. My mother wasn't quite 2 years old yet when they immigrated, so her memories of her grandfather were pretty minimal. But my aunt, my mother's eldest sister, Vilma Batara Koss, shared this about Lolo Mariano:

*"Lolo Mariano was a jeweler by trade. It's how he supported a family of 6 children. He dealt mainly with gold, pearls, jade and coral, at least that's what I remember. He made wedding bands, earrings, bracelets, necklaces. Nothing costume. He had his own workspace in his house with every tool imaginable. He would let me play with his magnifying glass and eyepiece and allowed me to light a match sometimes for one of his burners.*

*According to Uncle Joe, their grandfather (Mariano's father) was mestizo. As a child, Lolo Mariano would say words to me that I got to understand. I always thought it was another dialect. When I went to Spain [my aunt pursued her graduate studies in Spain], I realized he had spoken to me in Spanish - words like "miraki" = mira aqui in Spanish; or "skutyame" = escucha me. He used to sing me a song that went "dwermete mi presyosa ninya" = duermete mi preciosa nina (tune of "go to sleep my dear little baby"). He used to say "bebesto" a lot. = bebe esto meaning drink this. I would say he learned Spanish somewhere because he wasn't speaking Filipino and he had never left Ilocos, as far as I know. No idea where he learned it. Or where he got the precious stones which he kept in various empty coconut shells wrapped in banana leaves."*

In researching the Burke Museum archives and resources, and based on the sources listed on the tamburin pendant necklace (Accession ID 2018-101) artifact record in the database, I learned more about jewelry making in the Philippines and even more specifically Ilocos Norte.

I learned that this style of jewelry - tamburin - was used to spread Christianity in the Philippines during Spanish colonization beginning in 1521. Jewelry such as crucifixes were used as tools to replace amulets and talismans worn then by native Filipinos. Around the mid-eighteenth century, many Filipinos began wearing crucifixes and scapulars along with the tamburin necklace. The "tamborin" or sometimes spelled as "tamburin" is considered very



Above: Examples of earrings and rings made by my great-grandfather Mariano.



traditional Filipino jewelry.

“The earlier gold rosary beads were in the filigree technique, which used some kind of spool or frame to guide needle-like instruments in the looping and twirling of fine thread-like wire, giving these beads their name, tamborin, from tambour, the frame used in needlework.” Villegas, Ramon N., *Kayamanan The Philippine Jewelry Tradition*, Manila, The Central Bank of the Philippines, 1983.

These beaded necklaces became heirloom jewelry and were divided among family members. While there were a lot of tamburins made of gold at that time, materials like silver and brass were also made. During the American colonial period, local jewelry became more streamlined and eventually, the more traditional style such as the filigree technique took a backseat as gemstones became the focal point. This makes sense in my great-grandfather's case as he was likely a jeweler during that time (1930s onward) – and based on my aunt's recollections, my great-grandfather also focused more on gemstones.

Though I am not entirely certain my great grandfather made this example of a tamburin-style bracelet, I was most interested in the history of jewelry-making. Through this additional research, I learned too that Ilocanos have long been known for their artistry in jewelry-making, in part due to the abundance of gold deposits in these areas. Ultimately, this project allowed me to dig a bit deeper into my family history and document more information about my great-grandfather Mariano Salvador before these stories were lost. For that I am grateful. Although I am not trained in jewelry-making or metalsmithing, I am very much interested in art and design and jewelry design is an artform I have been interested in, even taking jewelry-making classes here and there. It is a passion I hope to pursue more seriously in the future, now knowing that it runs in my family history, following in Lolo Mariano's footsteps.

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“Tamborin Jewelry - A little Bit of History.” *Tamborin Jewelry - Wear A Piece of History*, October 12, 2012. <https://tamborinjewelry.wordpress.com/2012/10/15/tamborin-jewelry-a-little-bit-of-history/>.

Casal, Jose Jr., Casino, Elms and Solheim II, *The People and Art of the Philippines* (Los Angeles: Museum of Cultural History, University of California, 1981), 188.







## MALAYSIAN POTTERY

Kelsey Leong

As a material scientist, I am often fascinated by the materials that originate in different countries and how materials can shape the history and culture of each country. With this project, I had the opportunity to explore the history of ceramics in Malaysia, the country where my dad was born and raised.

Clay, or kaolinite, is made from alumina, silica, and water. Huge deposits of clay are found within Malaysia. The clay there is unique to other areas because it mixes with natural deposits and impurities from the rainforest.

Malaysian pottery techniques are thought to trace back hundreds of years; but there hasn't been any pottery found older than 250 due to the fragile nature of the pottery, the corrosive soil, and the humid equatorial climate. Thus, the pottery techniques used today have been passed down from generation to generation, rather than imitated from ancient artifacts. Similar to how it was hundreds of years ago, the Malaysian pottery-making process today is uncomplicated. There are no sophisticated tools like pottery wheels involved — the only two things a potter needs are earthy materials and simple tools. This pottery-making process is endorsed by tradition and it demonstrates that the organic relationship between pottery and user is very established and symbolic.

◀ Previous page: Kelsey Leong doing research in the Burke's Artist Studio.

▲ This page: Amie Le researching her pieces in the Arts & Culture Collection Storage space.





There are four main types of Malaysian pottery shapes: a buyang, a belanga, a periok, and a labu. The buyang is a large pot with a wide belly that is typically used to carry water. The belanga is a wide-rimmed pot with a round bottom that is used for cooking. The periok is a carinated vessel produced exclusively at Tembeling which is used to carry holy water. Finally, the labu is a gourd-shaped vessel that is also used to hold water.

For this project, I tried to imitate the labu pottery shape using terracotta clay. I attempted the Malaysian pinch, coil, and paddle method to attain this shape. It was a lot harder than it looked, but I think it turned out ok! I immensely enjoyed learning about the history of Malaysian ceramics and it was so much fun to try my hand at some of the pottery techniques.



# TELLING ANOTHER STORY ABOUT THE KALINGA PEOPLE

Kathleen Escarocha

Americans may know of the Kalinga tribal community through the sensationalized news of their head hunting practices. David Barrows, the American imperialist who later became president of the University of California from 1919-1923, once described Philippine indigenous people who head hunted in the mountainous region of Cordillera as “savages” “treacherous murderers” and “wholly untamable” (523). Barrows’ views echo the Spanish colonizer’s perceptions of natives a few centuries prior who described the natives as naked, dirty, and immodest.

Yet when I stumbled upon the skirt from the Kalinga in the Burke Museum’s archives, I was struck by the piece’s vibrant coloring and intricate details. Kalinga refers to both a tribal community and a province in the Cordillera region of northern Luzon, Philippines. Art critic and historian Marian Pastor Roces writes in *Sinaunang Habi: Philippine Ancestral Weave* that the Kalinga people’s weavings are known for the use of red and delicate adornments, like mother of pearl platelets called *pawekan* that provide visual drama. This *tapis*, a word which principally conveys the meaning of covering and so can refer to blanket or skirt, is a plain-weave cloth woven out of blue, pink, and yellow threads. The skirt has a pattern of alternating rows of blue and pink as well as zigzag and triangle motifs. Eric Moltzau Anderson explains that certain motifs, like the embroidered zigzag patterns, may represent a mountain

landscape. Some motifs may be less visual and more textural. Pastor Roces explains that Kalinga weavings can have small-scale motifs, such as miniature lattices called *inata-ata* that resembles eyes, like a “tiny sea of even texture more palpable than visible” (55).

As I researched the textiles of the Kalinga community, I found myself getting entangled in the complexity of indigeneity in the Philippines. The written information I have access to on the people of the Cordillera region is often filtered through the racist and imperialist perspectives of Western outsiders, academics, and anthropologists. For example, the distinctions that imperialists made and that have been adopted by contemporary scholarship between the Cordillera peoples, which include the Kalinga, Itneg, Kankana-ey, Bondoc, Ibaloi, and Isneg, cannot be solidified as clear ethnolinguistic differences. Even the term “Kalinga,” which originally meant “the enemy,” likely does not match the name the community originally had. While Kalinga may not necessarily be a tribal name, the term now refers to the population who live near the Chico River west of Tuguegarao.

While for an early 20th century American audience, the Kalinga inspired fears of native savages, I associate the Kalinga with the 1980s indigenous resistance movement against the Ferdinand Marcos administration’s proposed Chico River Dam project. Late dictator Marcos proposed a hydroelectric power generation project that would have displaced thousands of indigenous peoples of the Cordillera region from their ancestral land. Historian Mina Roces writes that Kalinga women played a key role in the Chico River Dam protests when they “bared themselves, undressing in unison, and marching militantly forward to push the barriers erected by the developers” (90). She explains that this act is a traditional form of Kalinga protest that had been last used when the Spanish conquistadors arrived in the sixteenth century.



► Next page: Kathleen Escarcha doing research in the Heritage Workroom.

The indigenous peoples' dissent to the Chico River Dam project and fight for self-determination helped birth contemporary activism in the Cordillera highlands and galvanized peoples to form multilateral agreements with the Kalinga-Bontok Peace Pact Holders. The movement also helped pass the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act in 1997 that required free, informed consent from indigenous people affected by developmental projects on their land. Yet as Sofia Guanzon reports for CNN Philippines, the legacy of the Chico is not totally secured. Indigenous groups in the Philippines continued to face the threat of displacement and harassment from programs such as outgoing president Rodrigo Duterte's Chico River Pump Irrigation Project.

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# I AM DRESSED FOR THE NEW YEARS AND YOU, FATHER, ARE NOT HERE

Kimberly II

red checkered woven scarf  
wrapped around my neck-  
these unbreakable threads-  
today i wear you.

i wear the memories of:

the blistering sun scorching the backs of your hands,  
devastated lands,  
the cries of war from the ground to the sky,  
a slight caress goodbye

the drops of sweat that bloom onto your scarf,  
the weight of two lives on your shoulders,  
the overwhelming relief when you reached khao i dang,  
how you harbored pain for so long.

this krama around my neck-  
the soul of your homeland-  
today i want to remember you like this.



# AN IMAGINARY\* INTERVIEW WITH A PHILIPPINES COLLECTIONS MUSEUM DONOR

Camille Ungoo

I met the donor for a cup of coffee yesterday. I wanted to chat with him about his gracious donation to the Burke Museum. Adding to the museum's growing Philippine collections, the donor gifted several objects he acquired during 1925 when he was teaching high school in Nueva Vizcaya. What follows is an account of our interview.

- Hello

Kumusta

- Oh.. yes, kumusta po. I see you learned some Tagalog?

Yes, beautiful language. I needed to learn so I could talk with some of my servants, even some of my students now that I'm thinking about it

- Yea I actually wanted to talk to you more about your experiences teaching in the Philippines. You had just donated several of your things to the museum

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\*actually imaginary, loosely based on archival evidence from Sarah Steinbock-Pratt's (2019) *Educating the Empire: American Teachers and Contested Colonization in the Philippines*





◀ Previous page: A flatlay of (left to right) a spear (metal head, wooden shaft), a wooden bow, six arrows (wooden shafts with wooden sheaths, metal heads, animal feathers), a braided whip (vegetable fibers), a wooden club, and two pencils (for size reference).

I taught in Luzon! Nueva Vizcaya. The mountain province, you know. Yes, all of those objects I got while teaching in the Philippines. Beautiful, beautiful colony of ours. Heard there might be talks of statehood for you... [pauses] or them?

**- My parents are immigrants from Pampanga and Makati. I also heard there might be talks of independence and a revolution**

Ohh... huh [pauses]

**- So, the objects. How did you get these things while working from a classroom? I imagine you must've been too busy teaching to... shoot around arrows?**

[Laughs] You saw my bow and arrows? Beautiful, aren't they. You should see the sheaths on the arrows. Exquisite weavings and detailings on those. Yes, during the week I taught a lot. I was teaching English to high schoolers. Such wonderful students, so loyal, so eager. A little clan-ish but hey, that worked out well when I taught those boys basketball [laughs again] But yes, those arrows. My weekdays were used teaching the great American ways of our language and our sports too, but my weekends and time off. Oh, those were mine and those arrows were my company.

**- What would you do or where would you go with the arrows then?**

The Philippines - beautiful place - gets really hot right? I mean you probably already know. It's so humid. So much forest, you have to see it for yourself. But I mean, the other American teachers couldn't really adjust. They'd get what we'd call "philippinitis"-

**- Like they're sick of being in the Philippines?**

Yea, well no I mean, no. The tropical climate was too much for them. They'd get low energy. I mean these folks couldn't so much as get up and teach, couldn't even think sometimes because of the heat, the humidity, the adjustment to the culture

**- Wait so they'd get neurasthenia?**

Yes, that! We'd call it... [pauses, quietly] philippinitis... But so! I didn't want to be like that dreary bunch. Have you heard of... what was it called by them? Calangaman!

**- Kalanggaman? You mean the island?**

Yes, that's the place! So, sometimes on my weekends and off days I'd take a boat there. Usually by myself, sometimes my buddy Herb - Herbert, another American. He taught in the Philippines same time as me. Sometimes, Herb would come down with me and we'd just become a real savage on Calangaman

**- What do you mean by "savage"?**

[Laughs] Well you saw those arrows! We'd practice our archery there. We realized Calangaman was deserted, except by occasional fishermen, so that island was pretty much mine! At first I was just shooting around, but after being there for a few days I realized I needed my own food so I'd try my hand at what the headhunters do, you know

**- [Pauses] so you'd go on these trips, most often by yourself**

Yes, sometimes Herb - Herbert would come with

**- Sometimes Herbert would join you. You'd bring your bow and arrows. Can I ask what else you'd bring?**

Sure! The bow and arrows, you're correct. Also brought with me a spear. Did you see the spear? I donated that too. Beautiful piece.



Real handy too. So I brought the spear, and that was about it. We'd just leave right after teaching on Friday, boat was already packed

**- Different set of clothes?**

Just the clothes on my back! Because- ... I don't know if I can say this to you [pauses] Well you're a modern gal. Hey, you probably are used to this too. Once Herb and I get to the shore, we strip down to our G-strings, just like real savages. We grasp our spears and we race along the beach yelling like headhunters. It was real wild [laughs] we definitely adjusted

**- ... No, I am not used to that. But okay, so what else would you do on Kalanggaman?**

We would explore the island. Really lay claim to it. It was isolated. Away from all the people and schools, the American GIs in Manila, civilization really. Oh, one night when we were there, Herb and I could see all these fishing canoes coming up from Cebu towards our island. Get this. We armed the place and fought them off!

**- With your spears and arrows?**

No, of course not. See my servant back in Nueva Vizcaya, great boy. He taught me how to make a cannon out of bamboo. Can you believe that! Intelligent people, your kind. So we made ourselves a bamboo cannon and fired them off at the canoes [laughs]

**- Hmm I hope those bangkas were okay...**

[Still laughing] Oh I had a great time. No more wilderness to explore and claim like that here though. Oh what were you saying?

**- Oh I actually wanted to ask you about the last 2 pieces from your generous gift to the museum. You also donated a wooden club and a braided whip? [pauses] These pieces... um, were these pieces maybe connected to the culture of Nueva Vizcaya?**

The culture of Nueva Vizcaya? Didn't know they had a culture, just thought they were Filipino?

**- Well, I mean. So, somewhat similar to you, I guess... I taught English to high schoolers in Indonesia-**

Oh! Did you get to Bali! I heard beautiful, beautiful things about those islands and those people. You know, the Dutch do wonders. Didn't know you're Indonesian

**- I didn't say I was. And, so I taught in Malang. It's a city on the eastern side of Java, and I came back with-**

You must've come back with some good stuff huh. You know, you kind of look Indonesian, bet you adjusted just fine

**- I came back with a mask based on Javanese tari topeng or mask dance. Malang is known for carving and painting the wooden masks that are used by the tari topeng dancers**

Wow! Now, I feel like I should be interviewing you huh. Are you going to donate your mask from... what was it called?

**- Tari topeng. Well no, because my friends from Malang gifted me a replica and rightly so. I didn't need to be taking from their wood carvings. I've hung up the replica in my apartment. It reminds me often of my time there, the friendships, my students, things I'm still processing about the decision to even teach in a place I am not in relations with... It reminds me that I'm still learning**

Oh... wow, huh

**- So, I wanted to ask you. What do the wooden club and the braided whip remind you of?**



# PIECED TOGETHER

Filipino American Student Association (FASA) sa UW  
2021 - 2022

Contributors: Faye Alarcon, Megan Eugenio, Gabrielle Garcia, Francis McManus, and many more!

One of the most frequently asked questions among students during FASA sa UW's visits to see the Philippine collections at the Burke was "who donated these artifacts to the museum?" To no one's surprise did we find out that these pieces were mainly donated by Westerners. Whether won in battle or gathered from street market stalls, these items had taken the interest of these foreigners and thus they found themselves thousands of miles away from their homes. While we were glad to be able to interact with them, connecting with them in ways only Filipinos can, we thought about what this meant for the collections. Being mostly donated by non-Filipinos, the collections represented a view of ourselves from the Westerners who took an interest in these things, usually ones that were foreign to them, and in a way, the collections were an orientalized version of us. In response to this, we asked ourselves what would the collections look like if we had been the ones to donate and curate our own set of artifacts. This project has allowed us to explore that. We present the Filipino-American Student Association's (abridged) version of the Philippine collections at the Burke: A model house also known as bahay kubo (#6246), a Filipino revolutionary flag (#6307), and a vinta boat model (#1991-6/3).



These pieces represent both our experiences during our visits to the Burke as well as our experiences as Filipino-Americans. The bahay kubo grounded us and asked us to reflect on how we define home for ourselves and for the artifacts living in diaspora. The flag reminded us of a history of resistance, a legacy we must continue. And last the vinta, a universal mode of transportation different in every region, emphasizing that we are not a monolith but we are forever joined by the waters and experiences that connect us. Our collage, a compilation of member submissions, goes deeper into these interpretations and what they mean to us individually.

We hope you enjoy! Isang Bagsak!



*"My experience growing up as Filipino-American, I reached, overturning over every rock, looking for media that I felt represented my heritage and my culture. So, seeing items that felt so familiar to me, in a setting (museum) that typically felt unfamiliar and unwelcoming to me because of its culture and barriers, was in a way, validating."*

*"These pieces, which came from various places and times, kind of represent my fellow peers in FASA. Our families moved to the US at different times with different experiences. Although we may come from various backgrounds, we (like the pieces) all ended up in the same place. Also, it was through FASA that I was able to learn about the collections and actually see them."*

**DISTANT**

reflective

Informative

Diversity

CONNECTION

PADAYON

*"There's an understanding of the varied lived experiences in the community, something I have always been grasping with. Even more, there's an acceptance of it, a love for it."*

*"It was great being able to see the artifacts and recognize some of them, I felt a lot more connected to my culture and my history. But at the same time I felt angry knowing a lot of these pieces were stolen."*

*"how did they come across these pieces?"*

*"There is something beautiful about the way that community persists even throughout all of these generations, even throughout all the periods when colonization or difficulty intended to divide."*

*"You can see the pain and struggle just by looking at it. The use of different fabrics, to the dried out blood, you can visualize the struggles and resilience of the Filipino People during the revolution."*

**POWERFUL**

colonialism

revolution

identity

Inspiring

*"seeing the fabric pattern, blood, and size was just really remarkable. It's a physical reminder of the violence and movements that occurred."*

*"how did we acquire them?"*



# REFLECTIONS

*From the winter to spring quarter, Southeast Asian-identifying participants visited the collections and were encouraged to look beyond the catalog card of donor and description of an object, and consider the possibilities of what stories could be told through the pieces.*

This project was meant to bridge folks who identify within the Southeast Asian diaspora in the Pacific Northwest, back to their cultural roots through collections. While there is great diversity within the region of Southeast Asia, there are also many relationships that permeate national borders, just one of many ideas that is also visible in collections.

While there were varying sparked interests during initial visits to the collections storage space, similar observations arose between researchers relating to the provenance of pieces, missing connections to roots, and the Asian American experience. Many pieces from the Southeast Asian Collections were donated after years of accumulation from work and leisure travels, and expeditions, but more recently donations have been made by members of community who have collaborated with the Burke Museum.

Other comments reflected on the diminishing relationship between one's self and their heritage, either from stories being lost with elders or family members who immigrated to the states, not wanting to discuss their ancestral histories. There was also the present sentiment that within an Asian American experience and of various Southeast Asian-located nationalities, these are more often

overlooked. Although stories should not be conflated into a singular box, it is undeniable that the diaspora shares similarities along the lines of not only cuisine and religion, languages and arts, but also through colonialism and imperialism, and war and extraction, all to name a few. In considering these special relationships, taking up space in the museum—in a colonial institution—is crucial.

Over the history of museums, the idea of community engagement, collaboration, and inclusivity has only more recently come to the forefront. In developing and implementing this framework, it is very clear that such practices take patience, trust, and intention. Community engagement in a space that is historically exclusive is not an easy pivot and requires thoughtfulness and support on part of museum staff in order to create a welcoming environment.

Entering into the field as a new museum professional, my hope is that projects such as this do not end here but continue to be built upon and improved. The work is never done and museums have the potential to bring communities together.

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*Special thanks to:*

*...the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture for supporting this work which I hope will only add to the continuing community-engaged efforts; my super supportive thesis committee which includes the spectacular Collections Manager of Oceania and Asia, Kathy Dougherty; always encouraging Meena Selvakumar; and Rick Bonus, whose previous work with the course Critical Filipinx American Histories inspired this project; all of the magnificent researchers who took time out of their schedules to visit the collections and create beautiful submissions for this zine; all the Museology homies for their input and reassurance that this project is cool; woof woof bark ily to Nymeria; Tyler (you've peripherally earned your MA at this point too); my sister, I guess; and last but not least, my mom and dad, whose labor and sacrifices got me to where I am today!*

*Maraming salamat,  
Gabbie*



# CONTRIBUTORS



## Kathleen Escarcha

Kathleen (she/her) is a PhD student in the University of Washington's English department. Her research interests include Asian American literature and transnational Filipina feminist movements. She was born in Quezon City, Manila and her family is Visayan, Bicolano, and Ilocano.



## Amie Le

Hello, my name is Amie (she/her)! I am a Junior double majoring in Medical Anthropology & Global Health and Human Evolutionary Biology also minoring in Data Science. Fun facts about me are I used to live in Japan and I love to bake. I hope through this project I can share a piece of my Vietnamese heritage through the folk tales that my parents would tell me as a child.



## Leah Huff

Leah Huff (she/her) is a second-year graduate student at the UW School of Marine and Environmental Affairs. Her research has revolved around her Filipino identity and reconnecting with her culture through dance, her thesis work, and connecting with the Burke Museum.



## Kelsey Leong

I am a graduate student in material science engineering at the University of Washington, who was born and raised in northern Virginia. I enjoy learning about material culture and how material science has contributed to the rise and fall of civilizations. I am half Malaysian and I always enjoy taking the time to learn about Malaysian history and culture.



## Kimberly Il

Kimberly Il is a Khmer American activist studying Law, Societies and Justice at the University of Washington. She is passionate about immigration rights and contemporary Cambodian American issues. She loves reading, spending time with friends, and going on walks.



## Swam Lin

Mingalabar! My name is Swam Yee Lin. I am a sophomore student and I intend to take business administration major. Fun fact about me is that I am ambidextrous. It is amazing for me to see valuable pieces from Myanmar in the Burke Museum. And I am so excited to share the culture and lifestyle of Myanmar (Burma).



# CONTRIBUTORS



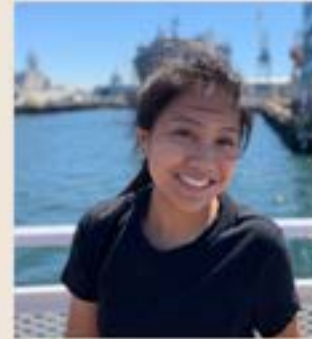
## Rose Mathison

Rose Mathison (they/them) is a second-generation mixed-Filipino. As a diasporic Filipino, their research has explored identity through museums, and how museum collections are a means of connecting to cultural knowledge. They received their MA in Museum Studies with a focus on collection management and community engagement and currently work as the Programs Specialist of the Bill Holm Center at the Burke Museum. They strive to provide a space for individuals to utilize ancestral materials to connect to their community and heritage, particularly fellow diasporic individuals searching for "home".



## Jessica Rubenacker

Jessica Rubenacker is second-generation Filipino American, born in Chicago and raised in the flat lands of central Illinois. She is currently the Exhibit Director for the Wing Luke Museum, where she manages the exhibits department and helps steward the community-based exhibit development process. Jessica also taught a course through the UW Museology Graduate Program for the first time in Winter 2022. She enjoys learning about other people's histories - and for that reason loves conducting oral history interviews - as well as researching her own family's history. Outside of work, Jessica finds much joy in tending to her 300+ houseplants.



## Camille Ungco

Hello! I am the child of Kapampangan and Tagalog immigrants. I'm a third year doctoral student at UW College of Education. I'm interested in the ways in which Asian and Pacific Islander K-12 teachers grapple with colonialism through both their racialized identities and their pedagogies.



## FASA sa UW

The Filipino American Student Association sa UW is a 105-year-old organization dedicated to fostering unity and pride among its members by providing a social, political, cultural, and educational space for Filipino and Filipino-Americans on campus.



